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THE HONORABLE DARRELL ISSA

May as Huntington's Disease Awareness Month

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize May as Huntington's Disease Awareness Month. In support of those with Huntington's Disease and of finding a cure, I have cosponsored H.R. 678, "Huntington's Disease Parity Act of 2009." This bipartisan legislation sponsored by Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA-41) would eliminate the 24-month waiting period for Medicare eligibility for those suffering from Huntington's Disease.

Huntington's Disease is a progressive degenerative neurological disease that causes total mental and physical deterioration in as few as 12 years and currently no cure exists. Already 20,000 Americans have been diagnosed with Huntington's and 6.5% of the population, or 200,000 individuals, are at risk for this disease.

The physical, emotional, and mental alterations a victim of Huntington's Disease undergoes are extreme to say the least. Even in the initial stages, patients are unable to continue employment and they must rely on family care and Social Security Disability Income. A similar neurological disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, received a waiver for the 24-month waiting period in 2000.

H.R. 678 would help to alleviate suffering that those diagnosed with Huntington's Disease must face every day. Implementing this legislation would not only help those diagnosed with Huntington's but also the families that have been financially devastated by this degenerative disease.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues in Congress and the public at large to recognize this important month.